

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

13 February 1987

AFGHANISTAN: IMPACT OF PEACE PROPOSALS ON
REGIME STABILITY AND UNITY [REDACTED]SUMMARY

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The recent Soviet-Afghan peace initiative almost certainly is causing nervousness and uncertainty about the durability of Moscow's commitment in Afghan government and party ranks. We also believe that the proposals have spurred an escalation in the infighting that has kept the ruling PDPA in turmoil since Najib became General Secretary last spring. The current peace campaign is likely to have an adverse impact on regime stability and effectiveness that probably could be effectively reversed only by an increased Soviet military commitment.

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Background of Endemic Internal Disorder

The Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) has been plagued by dissension between its Khalq and Parcham factions -- running the gamut from bitter debate to brawls to gunfights -- since the Party's inception in 1965. These confrontations have ebbed and flowed since the Soviet invasion but have [REDACTED] escalated significantly since Najib replaced Babrak Karmal as the General Secretary of the Party last May. The Party's twentieth party plenum in fall 1986 did nothing to

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This memorandum was prepared by [REDACTED] Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and should be directed to the Chief, South Asia Division, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis [REDACTED]

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ameliorate the problem; it served, in fact, to underline the strong base of support Karmal continued to command in the party, particularly in the Ministry of State Security (WAD) -- Kabul's security and intelligence service formerly known as KHAD. Najib's scathing public denunciation last fall of party inefficiency at the provincial level and his recent remarks to the media describing differences within the PDPA over the peace initiative clearly reflect on-going internal disputes that limit the regime's unity and effectiveness. [REDACTED]

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Making a Bad Situation Worse

We believe the Soviet-Afghan peace initiative launched in January -- which included a unilateral cease-fire, a partial amnesty for prisoners, and a proposal for a national reconciliation government -- has compounded the problem of factionalism by increasing the official nervousness first introduced by Gorbachev's Valdivostok speech and the partial withdrawal of Soviet units. In our view, the peace proposals are destabilizing because they are ostensibly designed to pave the way for an eventual withdrawal of all Soviet combat troops -- the sole effective guarantee of the regime's hold on power. The US Embassy in Kabul has reported on several occasions since mid-January, for example, that lower- and middle-level party and government officials were unnerved by the prospect of losing Soviet protection. [REDACTED]

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Most of these officials believe their lives would be at risk without the Soviet presence and, as a consequence, their confidence and efficiency likely are being sapped by the uncertainties surrounding the peace offensive. This uneasy atmosphere probably has also resulted in some increase in contacts between government and party cadres and their friends and relatives in the insurgency. Several insurgent leaders have pledged amnesty for regime members who come over to the resistance, and we would expect to see a considerable number of defections from government and party ranks if any sort of Soviet withdrawal becomes imminent. [REDACTED]

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We also believe that the futility of Kabul's national reconciliation campaign is driving home the regime's unpopularity to Najib and his colleagues -- and most damagingly to the rank and file -- to an unprecedented degree. A gathering of provincial elders -- landowners, tribal chieftans and businessmen -- told the governor of Konduz province, for example, that the guerrillas would never stop fighting until all Soviet forces leave Afghanistan. Meanwhile, several provincial leaders of the national reconciliation campaign have been assassinated by the resistance and a 14-member reconciliation delegation was taken captive by the insurgents. Finally, the regime has also been unable to persuade any prominent Afghan exile to support its peace initiative. This obvious lack of popular support almost certainly will sharpen official fears about the regime's future viability. [REDACTED]

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And Yet Another Bout of Factionalism

The failure of Najib's cease-fire to either take hold or prompt the large-scale return of refugees has [redacted] also caused increased dissent in the party -- even at the levels of the Politburo and the Central Committee -- and provided a rallying point for Karmal's supporters. We concur with the US Embassy estimate that the recent spate of bombings in Kabul probably is evidence of increased battling between the party's rival Khalq and Parcham factions -- or between supporters of Karmal and Najib in the Parcham faction -- as a result of the peace proposals. In our opinion, the failure of the recent peace campaign to take hold probably will make the split between the party's factions virtually impossible to bridge. [redacted]

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The peace initiative may also be driving a wedge of distrust between some members of the party and government leadership and the Ministry of State Security (WAD). [redacted] senior party and government officials had expected a largely positive response to Kabul's proposals from both the resistance and the refugees; indeed [redacted] many were "very confident" that a political settlement of the war was in the offing. [redacted]

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Prospects For Lasting Damage

The Soviet-Afghan peace campaign almost certainly will cause permanent damage to regime stability and effectiveness.

--The partial withdrawal of Soviet forces last October and Najib's recent public assertion that Kabul and Moscow have set a definite withdrawal timetable probably are enough to maintain a significant level of uncertainty about the future in the minds of government and party cadres even if the current campaign proves fruitless. As a result, we would expect some of these officials to do little more than go through the motions during the current effort to build a national reconciliation government. They are also likely to bend

every effort to maintain contacts with the insurgents

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--Because Soviet influence within the PDPA, according to US officials, tapers-off drastically below the party's upper reaches, we believe it is unlikely -- at least in the near- and medium-terms -- that the Soviets will be able to either impose order or restore morale among the cadres most dismayed by the recent proposals.

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